5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

Revolutions have since destroyed the herds, and the town now has only a small local trade in sugar and rum.

All goods are transported on mule-back over bad trails. Main trails run to Yajalon, San Cristóbal las Casas, and Comitan. Minor trails connect with Tenosique in Tabasco, a ride of five or six days through uninhabited forests. Other small trails lead into the heart of the forests along the Usumacinta river, where there are a few mahogany camps, fourteen days distance on a good mule.

The Spanish Conquerors had quickly discovered the richness of the soil and taken possession of it. Therefore, we find but a few Indians around Ocosingo, save at the small town of Sivacá, entirely inhabited by Tzeltal-speaking Indians. From there we secured our labourers, who were summoned by the municipal president and worked for us at the regulation pay of 50 centavos per day. Ocosingo holds sway over the native towns of Sivacá, Tenango, Oschuc, San Martín, and Bachajon. The municipality commands the Indians for all kinds of work, and in many ways lives on what can be pressed from them. As a consequence, the good people of Ocosingo are anything but popular among the Indians, though it appears that the man then in charge, Señor Simon Leon, was quite friendly towards them, and therefore well liked.

Geologically, the Ocosingo Valley is a syncline, the valley bottom and the interior mountain ranges being of a coarse red sandstone; and the exterior ranges of limestone. The axis of the valley runs approximately N-80-W to S-80-E, and Ocosingo town is located at an altitude of 900 meters above sea level.

As we rode into the village, La Farge discovered a stone block, carved with hieroglyphs, set in the pavement of the sidewalk, an excellent reception for archaeologists.

Our first concern was to find quarters, which we located in a house on the corner of a street leading into the Plaza. Soon our equipment was unloaded, and while we unpacked, the Ladino guide we had acquired in Bachajon went to his house to order food for us.

The restaurant and meal were a surprise, though not pleasant. In a room with a rotten board floor, the plaster falling off the walls, and a huge box full of saints, we were served fried eggs and black beans by an old woman with a large goitre. Though nothing in the house appeared to be either particularly exclusive or clean, the Ladino family seemed to resent that we sat down at the table with our chief guide, the trusty old Indian, Lázaro, now called "Tata" by us.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

owned plots of less than five hectares, corn is clearly the major crop, with 83 percent of the land devoted to its production. In the ejido lands, it is cultivated on less than 50 percent of the land, with wheat and beans sharing the remaining lands. Included in the category of ownership of five hectares or more are three large fincas where cattle fodder is grown. These fincas employ eighty-three laborers, some of whom live in the town center.

Since the Mexican census figures do not take into account the total land holdings of the household, I shall refer to the data on land use from my own census in 1964 (Table 5). Beans are grown (except in three cases) only if the household has more than the one hectare of ejido land grant. Corn and beans are grown together only on irrigated lands, both in high lands and in low country. Most farmers with ejido land grow wheat in addition to corn only when the land is in continual production, since it is believed that wheat gives "heat" to the land and improves the soil. This belief is supported by the real value of crop rotation.

Decisions concerning what crops to plant where are based on two sets of criteria: topology and soil characteristics. These criteria, furthermore, are the basis for determining what kinds of seed should be planted and what techniques of cultivation should be utilized.

Topological criteria. Because of the relative wealth of land resources, the steep hills are left uncultivated. All of the steep hills are communally owned, and the second growth of pine and scrub oak provides firewood. Tall pine growing in the higher lands of the colonia of San Vicente is sold by the community to private lumber companies.

The "belly of the land," the mound-like hillocks at the bottom of the hills, are sometimes cultivated or used for pasturage. On hilly lands farmers put rocks in the banks or curve the rows of corn to avoid erosion. The very low lands of the valley floor must be drained by digging ditches.

The flat irrigated lands of the valley floor are the most desirable lands for cultivation. The Indians are reluctant to sell these lands, and hold on to them until they are forced to sell.

When the officials reach concensus on what the mean yield (or *medio calculo* as they call it) is, they multiply this by the known amount of seed planted. Every six years a house-to-house census of what was planted is made.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

pyramid is complete, wood is laid against the pots in a tepee formation. When the sawmill in the vicinity was in operation, flat boards—scraps of cut lengths—were used, but now only logs are available. Corn husks or dry straw are stuffed between the planks or logs. When a large number of pots are being fired, the men usually help at the final stages to remove the charred planks with poles. If men are not available, the women of the household often call upon their neighbors for help. In this operation, the women wear sandals and hats for protection from the heat. When the pots are cooled, the women, sometimes with the help of the men, stack them in net bags, six to a net with straw protecting the pots.

About fifteen year ago, a kiln was introduced by the government in the interest of conserving wood. Those who tried it claim that the pottery did not fire well and that many of the pots were broken. I.N.I. (the Instituto Nacional Indigenista) planned to introduce an improved kiln, and while most of the people we questioned expressed a willingness to try it, the proposal was never put into action.

The men do most of the marketing of pottery. Loads of one or two dozen may be taken by bus or truck to San Cristóbal or to Comitán. When there is large-scale production throughout the community, as occurs just before major fiestas, truckers come from the neighboring town of Teopisca to contract for delivery.

The amount of pottery produced in households varies with the following factors:

1. Household composition: (a) Number of women in the family. If there is only one woman, very little or no pottery is produced because of the demands of domestic duties. Households with two or more women are able to sustain the ideal output of at least a dozen water jugs a week (I use "ideal" here to suggest their notion of what they produce when asked to guess. As Fig. 2 indicates, this varies considerably during the year.) (b) Age of women and ages of children. Older women over sixty do not independently undertake pottery production. They may assist in washing pots with corn gruel or making the neck, mouth, and handles, but they are unable to endure the harder task of collecting clay. A woman with infants under two years of age makes little pottery if

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

Women work steadily at making pottery. Older girls help with household tasks from the time they are six in order to permit their mothers to make pottery. They bring the water from the faucets installed at every other corner of the streets in the center, degrain corn, and when they are about ten years of age assist in grinding corn or bring the cooked corn to the mill. In three-generation families, the older woman tends to the tasks of preparing the meals while the younger women make pottery.

The men work uninterruptedly at agricultural tasks, taking only a noon break to eat a lunch of tortillas, coffee, and sometimes beans. During periods of intensive activity, women or children bring a hot lunch to the fields. At about three-thirty they return home, sometimes stopping to collect firewood along the way. When they arrive home, there are no greetings. They deposit their loads of harvested crops, firewood, or *zacate* (leaves and grasses to pack pottery). The children pick these up and bring them into the kitchen with no words spoken. The men sit on the bench of the porch, sometimes assisting their wives with degraining, and "rest their heart" until supper is served about six o'clock. The final task of the day is cooking the nixtamal for the following day's meals. The family retires about eight o'clock.

The weekly scheduling of household celebrations indicates the thorough absorption of the Catholic calendar into the social schedules of the town. The choice of Saturday and Sunday for most household celebrations is geared to a week in which Sunday is a day of rest.

Other significant days of the week are Thursday and Friday. Thursday is thought to be the day when "the earth is open." House curing fiestas are scheduled on this day since the earth of the house floor can receive its gift of liquor. This is also the appropriate day to visit the caves to ask for crops and cattle, or to make payment with candles. Friday has a sacred quality because of the crucifixion, but except during Holy Week and Lent the townspeople ignore any proscription on eating meat.

The Annual Cycle

The annual ceremonial cycle of religious rituals and life crisis events establish the pattern by which the people schedule their economic activities. Since the township gained dependence in 1931, there is no forced labor on

593 592 885 621 But a man wants to become independent of his father. While he is living within his parent's compound he is considered by the community to be "a child." He is bound to work his father's land and cannot control the produce of his own labor. Until he sets up his own separate domestic group, and becomes economically independent, he does not have full rights to participation in the political life of the community because (1) he is bound to make political decisions following his father's, and he has no voice in most community affairs which are the concern of household heads, and because (2) he cannot materially afford to take up the expenses of officership.

562 592 885 606 Women are also usually anxious to set up their own separate domestic group and independent housekeeping because this gives them some autonomy which they cannot achieve otherwise. The bond between a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law is not expected to be a strong one. We have already discussed how the two women are assumed to be somewhat antagonistic, and their common work of housekeeping is unequally distributed.

While women live in the same compound with their mother-in-law, they have no power to make decisions of their own about their working schedule, their housekeeping, or the food stored by the elder because this is under the control of the elder woman.

[574] A woman cannot freely take time to visit her mother because she is expected to keep her social life within the boundaries of [313] her husband's domestic unit. She cannot even go to gather firewood, which is an activity highly enjoyed by women. Except for getting water from the well or pipes in the street or gathering firewood, a woman has few chances to go out of the compound.

firewood, a woman has few chances to go out of the compound. Going to gather wood is a very nice break in the routine, and women usually go in the company of other women with whom they chat, exchanging news and gossip. A young wife usually stays home cooking while her mother-in-law leaves the house to gather the fuel for the hearth. Even if a woman does go out to gather wood, she is expected to do so with her mother-in-law, rather than with the women of her own natal family. A woman talking about a bad daughter-in-law will say, "She does not even want to gather firewood with me, she always runs to her mother's."

Women look upon having their own homestead as the only solution for gaining independence. It is true that, even then, they are under their husband's authority, but they control the food brought by the husband to the home, and they can make their own decisions about the work schedule. They can also take time to visit their own female relatives and childhood girl friends, a habit which is disliked by their mothers-in-law as being a threat to their own position.

We can see, then, that there are several factors which provoke structural tensions in the compound home; some are economic, others are related to the ordering of social relations in the kinship domain, and still others depend on the aspirations of the individuals.

In the course of time, the structural tensions accumulate to the point that they precipitate the fission of the household. The triad of a woman, her son and her son's wife, and the dyadic conflict between a father and son dissolves the compound into two